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Vocabulary Article

White, C.E., and Kim, J.S. (2009). Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together: How Systematic Vocabulary Instruction and Expanded Learning Time Can Address the Literacy Gap

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/35268>

Vocabulary is the most essential part of reading. “Vocabulary knowledge has been identified as the most important indicator of oral language proficiency, which is particularly important for the comprehension of both spoken and written language” (White). When students do not have large vocabularies, it is harder for them to understand what they have read. This could be a downfall when they are trying to complete a homework assignment or even just read a book for fun. Difficulty reading affects many young people; however, most of the people who are affected by this are people who do not have the resources to be able to read. Another group of people who are affected greatly are those who primarily speak a different language other than English.

If a child does not have a large vocabulary, they would not be able to read well. As children grow and learn, their vocabulary expands, allowing them to be able to read more difficult material. “The interdependence of word knowledge and reading comprehension increases as students advance through school” (White). Teachers should help students in every way they can to further their vocabulary. However, teachers should not just give students vocabulary words and tell them to look them up in the dictionary. This is not the most effective way of teaching vocabulary as students will not remember what they had learned because it is not in their own words.

When teachers are in the front of the classroom and students do not know a word, they should be able to ask the teacher what the word means. The teacher should then give many different definitions of the word. “As late as the fifth grade, children learn almost 80 percent of new words as a result of direct explanation, usually by a teacher” (White). When teachers do this, they are helping the students make connections to the world around them; the students then will make their own connections and be able to recall vocabulary more readily. A vocabulary system should be set up throughout the school and across all grade levels. Teachers should set the students up for success in their classroom. “Therefore, it is paramount to target the kinds of words that students are likely to encounter in textbooks and on tests and explicitly teach these across content areas” (White).

One problem with vocabulary in the school system is that there is not much time to incorporate it into the school day and have its own lesson. Therefore, teachers should incorporate vocabulary in some way throughout the day in every lesson. The students would then learn the importance of the words that have to do with the lessons they are learning. “Recent evaluations of systematic vocabulary instruction during the regular school day have produced positive impacts on children's vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills” (White). Vocabulary has an impact on the students throughout every aspect of their lives, especially in oral and written conversations.

As future teachers, it is important to teach vocabulary in a variety of ways. This allows students to pick which is the easiest way for them to understand a word and continue to use that approach when they come across a word that they do not know. This allows students to effectively read material and effectively communicate with others. In order for students to gain the biggest vocabulary, they need to be exposed to different techniques for learning words.

One recommendation that we have for our classmates is to be creative when they are teaching new vocabulary words. The students would be more likely to remember the vocabulary if they are taught in a fun way. If students do not understand some of the vocabulary that is being presented, the teacher should take more time and go over the word in a different way that the student may understand.